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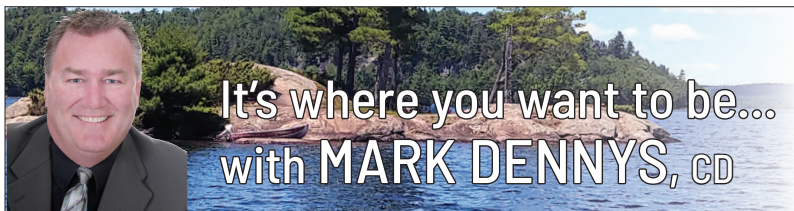
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## Vaccine 'likely' not available in Haliburton until the summer

MIKE BAKER

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

While rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine is well underway in some parts of Ontario, one local doctor, as well as the acting medical officer of health for the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit [HKPRDHU] are warning Haliburton County residents that it will likely be "many months" before a vaccine is readily available in our area.

In a phone interview with the *Echo* last week, Dr. Ian Gemmill, the acting medical officer of health with HKPRDHU, outlined exactly how the vaccine is being released across Ontario and why it's going to take so long for doses to reach our region.

"The province of Ontario are the ones making the vaccine available to the public, and it's going to be done via a schedule of priorities. Those sets of priorities are being devised by a vaccine task force," Dr. Gemmill said. "Where we are right now, the plan is to implement this in different phases."

Phase one launched on Dec. 14, 2020 when more than 2,500 healthcare workers who provide care in select long-term care homes and hospitals were vaccinated at the University Health Network

see **STUDENTS** page 2



### Sliding into winter

Jeremy Sharrard slides his motorcycle with studded tires around a turn on Saturday, Jan. 9 on Grass Lake in Haliburton. The ice track maker and ice racing enthusiast Steve Stiles of Haliburton wants to grow the sport. He welcomes people to contact him about trying ice racing at [s.stiles@live.ca](mailto:s.stiles@live.ca). See more photos on page 14. /DARREN LUM Staff

## Schools to remain closed until Jan. 25 as COVID-19 cases rise

SUE TIFFIN

Staff Reporter

On the same day the province reported a single-day record of 3,519 new cases of COVID-19, as well as a record high number of 89 deaths, Ontario's chief medical officer of health announced elementary students in southern Ontario will not be returning to in-person learning at schools

this week as scheduled. Instead, online learning will continue until Jan. 25, aligning with the plan already in place for secondary students. Elementary and secondary students in the northern part of the province will return to school as planned on Jan. 11, but the lockdown period currently in place in the southern parts of the province will be extended to the northern part as well.

The announcement was made by Dr.

David Williams, at a 3 p.m. media briefing on Jan. 7.

"This has been a significant week for us," said Williams, noting the high number records of the day and adding the hope was that the numbers would start decreasing, although he admitted they could also increase to 4,000 per day due to community transmission.

see **HALIBURTON** page 4

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# Haliburton at the back of the line for three-phase vaccine rollout

from page 1

in Toronto and The Ottawa Hospital. In the weeks since, the government has distributed approximately 90,000 of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and 50,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine to 17 hospital sites across the GTA, London, Ottawa, Windsor and Thunder Bay. The vaccine was made available to healthcare workers, essential caregivers, long-term care home and retirement home residents and First Nation communities and urban Indigenous populations within those areas.

Under phase one, the Ontario government estimates that more than 20 hospitals across the province will be administering the COVID-19 vaccines.

"These vaccines – not a lot of it is being delivered to Canada right now. There simply isn't enough to cover everyone in Ontario, far from it," Dr. Gemmill said. "The first geographical areas being done are areas with the highest preponderance with coronavirus – so places around the GTA, and other areas like Ottawa. With the limited amounts of the vaccine we have now, that's where the focus is."

He added, "Right now, Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge, and our communities, are not on that list. We have not yet been notified of the availability of the vaccine for our critically-important groups for our area, but have been notified to be on stand-by. Things could change on a day's notice."

Dr. Norm Bottum, from the Haliburton Highlands Family Health Team, believes it could be mid to late February before all frontline workers and long-term care residents in Haliburton County are administered a vaccine.

"That's my hope, but I don't know if that's more wishful thinking," Dr. Bottum noted.

While the public health unit will be involved in an advisory capacity in the gradual rollout of the vaccine to frontline workers and long-term care residents, Dr. Gemmill said most of the leg work would likely be done by Haliburton Highlands Health Services (HHHS), since the vaccines will be delivered to and stored within the facility's freezers.

Carolyn Plummer, president and CEO of HHHS informed the *Echo* that the hospital has not yet been given any details regarding timelines for the initial number of vaccine doses that are to be received in Haliburton County.

"We have been advocating strongly to receive the vaccine sooner rather than later, particularly with the recent rise in COVID-19 cases in our area," Plummer said. "Our community has done a wonderful job so far in helping to keep the prevalence low, and all the healthcare providers in our community have been working tirelessly to keep our patients, long-term care residents, and many others in the community as safe as possible – so we are doing everything we can to make sure the vaccine is made available as quickly as possible to support these efforts."

Phase two will begin when more doses of the vaccine become available in Ontario, and will be expanded to include additional congregate care settings, such as homeless shelters, and adults over the age of 70 in select regions. According to the Ontario government website, the province's task force, led by retired military general Rick Hillier, will use ethical framework and best available data to identify other priority populations, notably lower age groups, within phase two, based on available vaccine supply.

While the government says phase two will likely be implemented this winter, Dr. Gemmill believes a more realistic likelihood is that it will be stretched out to the summer.

Things could change, Dr. Gemmill says, if the federal government approves further vaccines, such as the AstraZeneca vaccine that has been developed at Oxford University in the UK.

"There is not just one vaccine for COVID-19, there are several vaccines. It just so happened that the first ones approved [in Canada] required freezing," Dr. Gemmill said. "I'm very hopeful that we're going to have different vaccines available soon. One for example, Oxford's AstraZeneca, is not yet licensed, but is fridge stable. That is going to change everything. We wouldn't have to worry about freezers. That vaccine would allow us to do mass campaigns in the same way we do influenza vaccines every year. That would make things much, much easier."

The UK became the first country to approve the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine on Dec. 30, with the first dose administered just a few days later. Ontario Premier Doug Ford has called on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to approve its use in Canada and secure doses so that it



Dr. Ian Gemmill, acting medical officer of health, said 2021 is the year the population can be immunized against COVID-19, and said the vaccine as the "bright light at the end of the tunnel." /Photo submitted by HKPRDHU

can be rolled out to residents who want and need it.

One of the major benefits of the AstraZeneca vaccine, Dr. Gemmill says, is that it can be fully administered in a single dose, while both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two shots given several weeks apart.

Before Christmas, the feds exercised options to purchase 20 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine and 40 million doses of the Moderna vaccine. Procurement Minister Anita Anand informed CBC on Sunday [Jan. 10] that the government had chosen not to exercise a further option to purchase an additional 16 million doses of the Moderna vaccine.

Anand said the doses the Canadian government had already ordered would ensure that anyone who wants the COVID-19 vaccine will be able to receive it by September.

A third and final phase of vaccine distribution here in Ontario will kick in once there are enough doses available for anyone who wants to be immunized – likely late summer, or early fall.

With around 11,000 patients across Haliburton County, at least half of them over the age of 65, the Haliburton Highlands Family Health Team is the community's largest family clinic. Staff have been inundated with calls in recent weeks as residents try to find out when they can get their shot.

"We have a lot of seniors. I don't have an exact number for you, but we have the highest percentage of seniors to population anywhere in the province. We have a lot of people over the age of 80 who still live at home doing what they can to keep mentally and physically fit, waiting for the vaccine to come," Dr. Bottum said.

He continued, "The government has committed to trying to get people in Canada immunized by September, but that's still nine months away. For many people, it's probably going to be July, August, September by the time we have enough vaccines to give to people. So the general public, I would say, will probably have a long wait ahead of them."

Dr. Gemmill informed the *Echo* that, to the best of his knowledge, there had been zero vaccines administered thus far in Haliburton County. We were able to identify one former area resident, Kristen Bell, as having recently received the vaccine. A registered nurse whose parents were longtime residents of the county, Bell was given her shot at a clinic in Barrie last week.

"The process was really easy... and took very little time. It was just a consent, quick jab and [staff] watch you for 15 minutes to make sure you are ok. I'll go back to receive my second shot in two weeks," Bell told the *Echo*.

Even though she was among the first percentile of Ontarians to receive the new vaccine, Bell says she wasn't nervous at all to get the shot.

"It is important for me to become vaccinated to protect myself, my family and the vulnerable populations I care for on a daily basis. The more people who are vaccinated, the less community spread we should see," Bell said. "These vaccines are well researched and I have to put my trust in this research. Without vaccines we can-



When available, vaccines will be delivered to and stored within freezers at the Haliburton Highlands Health Services facilities./File photo

not control this disease."

Dr. Gemmill offered his opinion that the COVID-19 vaccines presently on the market were "quite safe."

"The only indication saying you shouldn't get the vaccine is a previous life-threatening allergic reaction to any of its components," Dr. Gemmill said. "Right now, there have been hundreds of thousands, if not millions of doses given across the world. I've heard of a couple of situations of allergic reactions, but they seem to be very uncommon. It is quite a safe vaccine. I don't foresee there being any major difficulty [for people getting it]."

In his research, Dr. Bottum said he found one report that states the incidence rate of allergic reaction to the COVID-19 vaccines on the market is five per million, while another report outlines a slightly higher rate, at 11 incidents per million.

"The odds of having a reaction are pretty small. The odds of us getting one in Haliburton County, if we're going off 11 in one million, there may be one to get a bad allergic reaction, so I think people are pretty safe. We just need to be careful about it," Dr. Bottum said.

When available, the COVID-19 vaccine will be free to all Ontario residents, Dr. Gemmill confirmed. As of 10:30 a.m. on Monday [Jan. 11], there had been 122,105 total doses administered across Ontario, with 5,884 vaccinations considered complete.

Updated COVID-19 statistics provided some grim reading over the weekend, with Ontario reporting a record-high new COVID-19 case count on Sunday, with 3,945 new cases and 61 new deaths. As of press time, Ontario had 30,632 active cases of COVID-19.

Here in the HKPR district health unit there are 70 active cases – three in Haliburton County, 38 in the City of Kawartha Lakes and 29 in Northumberland County, with one additional "probable case" in the Kawarthas. There are a further 101 high-risk contacts across the region, with two of those located here in Haliburton.

Both Dr. Gemmill and Dr. Bottum reiterated the same line of messaging, asking that local residents respect the rules of Ontario's current lockdown, in place until at least Jan. 23, and stay home whenever possible.

"I think we're seeing the repercussions now from the Christmas break. Hopefully by next week we will see some reduction in the numbers, otherwise the lockdown could go on even longer," Dr. Bottum said. "There were a lot of cases over the holidays, and it was down to people gathering with family and friends."

Dr. Gemmill added, when referencing the increased number of cases in recent weeks, "It's definitely down to people who are travelling, who are gathering unnecessarily for social situations. Don't travel. Don't gather, because that's what's driving the spike at the moment. Until we get the vaccine, that's what we need to do."

Dr. Bottum noted that his patients would be informed as soon as they're able to be vaccinated, while Dr. Gemmill hinted there would be a campaign to ensure even those without family doctors would be notified when the vaccine becomes readily available.

"Let's look at 2021 as the year of getting our population immunized against this virus and stopping it in its tracks. I don't think we'll completely get rid of the virus, but certainly we will be able to control it," Dr. Gemmill said. "The vaccine is the bright light at the end of the tunnel, and I'm very excited that over the next few months we'll be able to offer this vaccine to anyone in Ontario that wants it."



# 2020 the year of the pandemic, but not all bad local MPP says

MIKE BAKER

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MPP Laurie Scott says “there is light at the end of the tunnel” as communities all across Ontario continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

Speaking to the *Echo*, a day removed from the provincial government’s decision to prolong the closure of all public schools in Ontario until Jan. 25 in the wake of increased cases of the novel coronavirus, Scott pointed towards some of the “important” programs and initiatives launched in 2020, as well as the continued rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines as a reason for local residents to be optimistic as we progress into a new year.

Reflecting on what she says was “absolutely” her toughest year yet in politics, Scott, a five-term veteran of the provincial political arena, painted a picture of positivity when discussing a period that will undoubtedly be remembered by only one word – pandemic.

“The year started out in a usual way, then March came and it has been a year like no other. Fighting a global pandemic...” Scott paused, struggling to find the words appropriate to describe just how difficult the past 10 months have been for her, her government and, most of all, her people.

Still, she tried, going on to highlight the commitment and tenacity of all frontline workers who were faced with such adversity in the opening weeks and months of the pandemic. Scott makes a point of thanking the “many heroes” who unified and held our community together through such a tumultuous time.

“We have seen remarkable collaboration,” Scott said. “Right here at home, when you think about the doctors, nurses, PSWs, paramedics, police officers, firefighters, grocery store clerks, the truck drivers, just our neighbours – the men and women that said ‘this person is in isolation, we have to get them groceries’... That coordination... It brings a tear to my eye the fact that we live in such communities that really, truly help each other out.”

The widespread response to the devastating COVID-19 outbreak at Pinecrest Nursing Home in Bobcaygeon was a prime example of that community spirit. With dozens of residents and staff infected, it was volunteers from other long-term care facilities and hospitals that swooped in to fill shifts and make sure things were taken care of at the most desperate of times.

By the time the province declared the near two-month outbreak at the facility was over, 28 residents and a spouse of a resident had died of COVID-19 complications.

When asked to describe the local response to the Pinecrest outbreak, Scott said: “Remarkable.”

Another highlight, Scott notes, was the tabling of Ontario’s 2020 budget, on Nov. 5 of last year.

“The budget really laid the foundation and enabled [the provincial] recovery to take place,” Scott said, pointing towards the government’s commitment of \$45 billion in support funding to residents over the next three years.

Some of that money will be used to improve broadband internet services in rural communities just like Haliburton County. Scott stood alongside Premier Doug Ford when he visited Minden on the eve of the budget’s release, announcing nearly \$1 billion in provincial funding



Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MPP Laurie Scott lists added investment in broadband internet services among the most significant things the Ontario government did in 2020. / File photo

to expand and improve internet and cell services across Ontario.

As a long-time advocate for new investments in high-speed internet across the riding, Scott says she was particularly pleased to finally see some movement in that department.

“There has never been more of a time to understand the digital divide that exists [in Ontario] than during this pandemic. We have to move faster and quicker,” Scott said. “I live it every single day as a resident up here... This is something we needed before, and we need to take the opportunities now to build it [up] and connect people. [This is] probably the biggest thing I can do for the people in my riding and in my area.”

There was also a mention of providing different supports to the tourism sector, a big deal here in Haliburton County, in an attempt to help different community groups and organizations get back on their feet later this year.

“We have not forgotten about that sector. There are programs rolling out, some beneficiaries have already received some help in our area, but that’s a coordinated effort that’s ongoing,” Scott said.

Calling herself a “people person,” our local MPP says she longs for the day we can put this pandemic behind us and return to some sense of normality. With the government continuing to rollout the COVID-19 vaccines, with the more high-risk areas receiving the first doses [see story on front page], Scott estimates it will likely be a few months before the majority of residents in our riding have the opportunity to get it.

“As hopeful as we are that those vaccines will roll out, it will be more in the spring when we see more people who aren’t so vulnerable getting it,” Scott said. “We certainly need more vaccines. We’re ready to distribute as many as we can. Some more will start arriving. This will all get better – there is light at the end of the tunnel.”

## County continues to investigate transportation options

CHAD INGRAM

Staff Reporter

Haliburton County council continues to investigate options for some kind of public transportation system, and county staff are recommending that the county create a bylaw at the upper-tier level that would allow it to more easily enter into agreements with service providers.

During a Dec. 16 county council meeting, councillors heard from tourism director Amanda Virtanen, who noted staff had been in discussions with a shared-ride service provider who’d been interested in creating a pilot project for the county, geared toward tourists, which would have operated between May and October of 2020. “As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the provider wasn’t able to continue discussions due to a lack of internal resources,” Virtanen said. As a result, Virtanen said staff had then approached a different shared-ride service provider about the creation of a pilot project for the county, with the company providing a business plan for the county’s consideration.

That plan was discussed by county council during a closed session on Nov. 25. According to Virtanen’s report, the reason that discussion was held in-camera was that it met provincial criteria pertaining to, “a trade secret or scientific, technical, commercial, financial or labour relations information, supplied in confi-

dence to the municipality or local board, which, if disclosed, could reasonably be expected to prejudice significantly the competitive position or interfere significantly with the contractual or other negotiations of a person, group of persons, or organization.”

“Since that November meeting, the company has revealed they’re launching into other markets and are not able to pursue opportunities with the County of Haliburton,” Virtanen told councillors. “So while there isn’t currently an active discussion with a shared-ride service provider, we do recommend investigating the development of a shared-ride service bylaw for 2021, which would enable future opportunities for county consideration should they arise.”

Councillors seemed comfortable with the idea.

“I’m in favour of this, but isn’t this one of 100 things that will flow from the service delivery review?” said Minden Hills Mayor Brent Devolin, referencing a review for the county and its lower-tier governments that was recently completed by consulting firm StrategyCorp.

“It might be,” said Algonquin Highlands Deputy Mayor and County Warden Liz Danielsen.

County chief administrative officer Mike Rutter said he’d contact the CAOs of the four lower-tier municipalities regarding the matter.

County council previously voted against proceeding with a booked-ride transportation pilot project.

New Cases Reported Today							
1	6	11					
Haliburton	KawarthaLakes	Northumberland					
Total Confirmed Cases to Date *							
39	320	301	660				
Haliburton (HAL)	Kawartha Lakes (CKL)	Northumberland (NTH)	HKPRDHU				
Note: *Total cases by County and for the Health Unit overall may increase or decrease from previously reported counts as cases may be reassigned to or from the HKPRDHU based on case investigation details and routine data cleaning.							
COVID-19 Contacts, Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by County *							
County	Cases Not Resolved	Cases Resolved	Current High-Risk Contacts	Current Probable Cases	Hospitalizations (Total to date)	Deaths among Confirmed Cases	Deaths among Probable Cases
Haliburton	3	36	2	0	1	0	0
Kawartha Lakes	38	259	51	0	19	23	13
Northumberland	29	268	48	0	8	4	0
COVID-19 Contacts, Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths, HKPRDHU							
All Counties	Cases Not Resolved	Cases Resolved	Current High-Risk Contacts	Current Probable Cases	Hospitalizations (Total to date)	Deaths among Confirmed Cases	Deaths among Probable Cases
HKPRDHU	70	563	126 **	0	28	27	13

One new case of COVID-19 in Haliburton County was confirmed by the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District health unit on Jan. 11. Locally, there are currently three unresolved cases and two current high-risk contacts, with 36 cases previously reported in Haliburton County considered to be resolved. For more information visit <http://www.hkpr.on.ca/Screenshot from the HKPRD health unit website>

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# Students revert back to online learning as schools remain closed

from page 1

"With the public health trends where they are across the province, our priority remains keeping students, teachers, school staff, and all Ontarians safe," Premier Doug Ford said in a press release distributed at the same time as the media briefing. "We have to get the numbers down and today's measures will help us continue to stop the spread of this deadly virus."

At a photo opportunity earlier that day, Premier Doug Ford told reporters that one in five kids under the age of 13 in Ontario being tested are now positive for COVID-19.

"That's not mentioning all the other kids that haven't been tested that might have a runny nose or a cough," Ford told CBC reporters.

Williams said despite the province-wide shutdown that began on Dec. 26, data has not shown a reduction in positive case numbers as hoped, and that trends in health system capacity and community transmission were "concerning."

"Targeted testing done among students and staff in December 2020 confirmed that schools are not a significant source of transmission," reads the Jan. 7 press release from the Ontario government. "However, with students having been at home for several weeks and with reports of concerning behaviour over the holidays, the positivity rate among school-aged children has increased sharply. Most troubling, the positivity rate for kids aged 12-13 years old increased from 5.44 per cent in late November, early December to nearly 20 per cent in early January."

Prior to the announcement, some public health units – including Windsor-Essex and Guelph – had already planned to keep schools closed regardless of the province's decision.

Thursday's announcement is a reversal from the government's consistent messaging, as early as this week, that schools would stay open. When reporters asked why the plan changed, and with such short notice for parents to plan and prepare for the extended closure, Williams said the case numbers continue to look "very disappointing," and so more time is needed prior to open-



In a Jan. 7 press conference, Ontario's chief medical officer of health, Dr. David Williams, announced that as COVID-19 cases and the number of related deaths rise in the province, elementary school students will not return to in-school class this week as scheduled, instead returning on Jan. 25. / Screenshot from CPAC

ing safely. "I have and remain firmly committed to getting students back into class as soon as possible - there is nothing more important," said Stephen Lecce, minister of education, in Thursday's press release. "However, the best medical and scientific experts have been clear: while schools have been safe places for kids, the sharp rise in community transmission puts that progress and Ontario families at risk. During this time, students will remain engaged in live teacher-led online learning with access to enhanced mental health and technology supports." On Jan. 2, before students enrolled in in-class learning were anticipating beginning a week of virtual learning after the holiday break on Jan. 4, Lecce wrote an open letter to parents, which was shared by the Trillium Lakeshore District School Board on Jan. 5.

In that letter, Lecce said it had been a trying year for all Ontarians, but said the province had come together, "most especially inspired by our students, parents and education staff."

He thanked parents for their dedication, and said, "We believe so strongly that schools are essential to the well-being, mental health and development of a child, and therefore, must be safeguarded at all costs to ensure they can remain open for safe in-class instruction."

The province-wide shutdown beginning Boxing Day put in place "time-limited public health and workplace safety measures to help ensure our schools remain safe, to stop the spread of COVID-19 transmission in communities, and to save lives," wrote Lecce last week. "Now, while leading medical experts have been clear that schools are not a source of rising community transmission, we can and will be an important part of the solution to save lives from COVID-19."

He said the government was following the advice of the chief medical officer of health "by taking proactive and preventative action to protect schools following the holiday break," with elementary and secondary students across the province learning remotely for the first week of January. Elementary school students, as well as secondary school students in northern public health units, were expected to return to in-person class on Jan. 11, while all other secondary school students would return to class on Jan. 25. "I want to reassure parents that according to the province's leading doctors, our schools are safe, with eight out of ten schools in this province having no cases of COVID-19 and based on board reporting, 99.64 per cent of students have not reported a case of COVID-19," said Lecce. "The province has experienced a safe reopening because we developed a comprehensive, nation-leading plan in partnership with experts in the medical community."

As of Dec. 22, the last day the Ontario.ca summary of cases in schools page was updated, 7,292 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in school-related student, staff and unidentified individuals had been reported since September's school reopening. At that time, 976 schools of 4,828 in the province had a reported case, a percentage of just over 20 per cent.

On Jan. 6, the day before the school closure announcement, ETFO – the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario – which represents 83,000 elementary public school teachers, occasional teachers and education professionals across the province, distributed a press release calling on public health units to "reconsider return of all elementary students to in-class learning next week." The release said ETFO was asking medical officers of health

"to prioritize community health and safety over politics."

"Educators know that in-person learning provides the most effective and equitable learning environment, but unfortunately we are at the height of this pandemic," said Sam Hammond, ETFO president. "It makes no sense for the government to send students, teachers and education workers back to school while the province is locked for another two to three weeks. Despite repeated calls for adequate safety measures, the government has refused to implement them in a misguided effort to save money, jeopardizing the health and safety of students, educators and their families." The ETFO press release said that it was essential to protect those who are most vulnerable.

"The provincial government's failure to listen to the advice of medical professionals has resulted in the current crisis we are facing," said Hammond. "So now, we are asking public health units to use their authority to reconsider the decision to resume in-person learning for all elementary students on Jan. 11, particularly in communities where the rate of community transmission is high, and to implement asymptomatic surveillance testing in schools to ensure that we can better understand the role that schools are playing in the spread of the virus and base future decisions on sound data."

In that same press release, Dr. David Fisman, professor of epidemiology at the University of Toronto said: "There's a 10 per cent daily increase in ICU occupancy in Ontario right now. This is not the right time to restart in-person learning. We have to assume that there is a lot of asymptomatic COVID-19 in schools. It is irresponsible to send children and educators back to schools without knowing for sure that it is safe to do so." According to ETFO, the organization "continues to demand that the provincial government provide much-needed supports to families, especially during periods when schools are closed to in-person attendance."

"We also continue our advocacy to ensure that the government acknowledge and address the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on marginalized communities, in particular racialized and low-income families," said Hammond. "A safe return cannot be ensured unless urgent and immediate actions are taken to implement a safety plan that reduces class sizes, improves ventilation, and introduces broad in-school asymptomatic testing when in-person attendance resumes."

Data from licensed child care settings – both child care centres and agencies, which have remained open – has continued to be updated. As of Jan. 7, 1,630 confirmed cases in child care centres and homes have been reported since June 12, with 233 centres currently reporting a confirmed case, a percentage of 4.44 per cent, and 40 centres closed of 5,245 open child care centres. More information is available at [ontario.ca/page/covid-19-cases-schools-and-child-care-centres](http://ontario.ca/page/covid-19-cases-schools-and-child-care-centres).

On Jan. 7, 89 deaths due to COVID-19 were reported by the province, bringing the official death toll in the province to 4,856. More than 75 per cent of those deaths were long-term care residents. In Haliburton County, 39 local cases have been confirmed since March, three of those being unresolved. On Dec. 18, TLDSB spokesperson Sinead Fegan said the school board currently had no active cases. More information from the school board regarding COVID-19, remote learning supports for parents, and mental health and well-being resources is available at <http://www.tldsb.on.ca>.

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# Youth Unlimited thanks community for support

DARREN LUM

Staff Reporter

As Haliburton's afternoon rush hour traffic rolled by, a masked man in a blue and yellow costume, resembling the Marvel character Wolverine, of X-Men comic book fame, waved his gloved hand with plastic claws from the corner of Highland and York Street, holding a sign, reading, 'Honk to support for the youth of Haliburton.'

Ian McIntosh, the satellite director of Haliburton Highlands Youth Unlimited, later spoke to the *Echo* about wearing the costume to celebrate the "milestones" reached through the fundraiser 'One to 100'.

The three-week fundraiser ran just prior to the holidays, via the Giving Box platform.

There were 100 squares, each containing a dollar amount, that people could choose as their donation for the general fund to support programming for Haliburton Highlands Youth Unlimited, who help support eight to 20-year-olds in the area.

Their initial fundraising goal of \$5,050 was met within a week. In total, 'One to 100' (and later expanded to 'One to 150') raised \$6,048.

McIntosh made public appearances with the costume and completed various other stunts, such as kissing two live pigs on the lips, and jumping in the frigid water of Head Lake.

The local Youth Unlimited location is a "satellite of Kawartha Youth for Christ, working together with local residents, businesses, churches, schools and govern-



Dressed as comic book superhero Wolverine, Ian McIntosh, satellite director for Haliburton Highlands Youth Unlimited waves to drivers with youth assistant Matthew Wilson on Highland Street on Friday, Dec. 18 in Haliburton. /DARREN LUM Staff

ment for the youth in our community."

McIntosh has held his current position for the past two years, but has been involved with youth work for close to a dozen years.

In his short time working here he has gained insight into the challenges facing youth in the Highlands, ranging from alcohol and drug dependence to mental health concerns related to anxiety and depression.

"There's quite a range of stuff that goes on," he said. "I'm happy to be there in that time. Obviously not happy that it's going on, but that I could be there for them."

The money collected will help to alleviate budgetary concerns for Youth Unlimited and has the potential to help fund new programs.

McIntosh said the approach of Youth Unlimited works under the premise of enabling youth to realize their full potential.

"From bare bones, in the thick of it, right in the mud, and we try to see what their strengths are and work alongside them day-to-day... having meetings and helping them through certain issues that they're going through. It can take weeks. It can take months," he said.

He referenced one youth, who is dealing with a death in the family.

"To see the transformation from day one to now is absolutely incredible," he said. "We do that by, like I said, meeting with them, praying with them, meeting with their family, helping them get professional care from doctors or professional counsellors, because by no means at all are we professional counsellors. We'll never claim that."

Although the foundation for this organization is Christian-based, it has provided children from a wide array of backgrounds emotional support and education over the years.

Among the programs funded are the pre-COVID-19 Lunch Time Drop-in at Haliburton Highlands Secondary School, where students socialized and ate their lunches, with snacks provided by Youth Unlimited. There was also a tutoring class at HHSS, and ongoing online music lessons, teaching piano, guitar and drums, which are 30-minutes in length held over an eight-week period, including optional 15-minute "life lesson" sessions.

With COVID-19 looming over all aspects of life, the need for youth to receive support has only grown, McIntosh said.

"It's a hard time for a lot of young people. Well, pretty much everybody," he said. "We hang onto the hope that we're going to see every young person living to their fullest potential. We see that there is going to be good coming out of this for sure. It's not all bad. There sure is a lot of bad, but the good is going to outweigh the bad when it comes to the end of this." he said.

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# points of view



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*Forever in our memories: Creighton Feir*

## This isn't the time to be playing games

As a massive sports fan, there's a big part of me that kinda, sorta hates the fact that I wrote this editorial.

Alas, it had to be done.

I expect I'll cop a fair amount of flak for this, but why on earth are top-level athletes being given even more of a reason to believe they're some kind of godly humanoid hybrid, who don't have to adhere to all the rules and regulations us mere mortals live by on a day-to-day basis?

Remember when the Ontario government initiated that super inconvenient lockdown back on Boxing Day with the understanding it would help to flatten the curve of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic? Yeah, me too. However, it seems the National Hockey League didn't get the memo.

Literally. They didn't get it.

Last we heard, Ontario Premier Doug Ford said, on Dec. 21, that no decision had been made over whether the province would allow NHL games to be played in Toronto and Ottawa this season.

In an effort to pacify the Canadian government, who had already refused to give special treatment to the Toronto Raptors and allow them to travel back and forth between Canada and the USA for NBA games, foregoing COVID-19 quarantine regulations, the NHL made significant changes to its divisional structure, creating a Canada-only conference, made up of the country's seven professional big league teams.

The new hockey season is set to begin tomorrow (Jan. 13), with the Maple Leafs taking on the Montreal Canadiens in Toronto.

While I am excited to once again have the opportunity to sit in front of my TV and watch some live hockey,

there's another part of me that thinks it's absolutely ridiculous that, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, certain people are being allowed to break all of the health and safety regulations the general public have been told they categorically must follow.

I understand the NHL playoff bubbles that took place in Toronto and Edmonton last summer were very successful. But they came at a time when the COVID-19 numbers were trending downwards in Canada. We just had yet another record-breaking day for new cases on Sunday here in Ontario. Things aren't okay right now.

Things are even worse over in the UK. Despite having almost 1.6 million active cases of coronavirus, and initiating a strict national lockdown that includes a stay-at-home order for all residents and the closure of all schools, it was deemed appropriate for the nation's four professional soccer leagues to carry on playing games behind closed doors.

That hasn't stopped almost 100 players and coaching staff from the 20 top teams in the country, and hundreds more in the divisions below, from catching COVID-19. Still, the games continue.

It's the same in Germany, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Austria, Poland... Basically, all of Europe. The cherry on top there is that certain teams have been granted permission to travel overseas and compete in an ongoing international competition. Because COVID-19 has unquestionably shown that it does not affect soccer players, and it does not cross international lines...

On second thoughts, maybe it's the same for hockey players! Yeah, that must be it. Nice. Crisis averted.

Let the games begin, I guess.



mike baker

## Editorial

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Lights of the season

by Darren Lum

## Walking it off

MONIKA WAS moving through diamonds and pearls. The thought amused her as she made her way over the snowy landscape. Fresh snow had turned stumps and rocks into smooth white mounds and the freezing rain that preceded it had created magic. Bare branches were coated in sparkling gems that caught the sunshine and glittered happily. Below an impressively blue sky the world shone with beauty and hope. At least that was how Monika was trying to see it.

For she wasn't feeling particularly hopeful today. She told herself it was the predictable post-Christmas letdown. After the holiday excitement of gift-giving, rich food and a house decorated inside and out, her regular day-to-day life felt routine and sedate. There was also the matter of ten extra pounds that had mysteriously appeared on her bathroom scales.

The news didn't help. While Monika liked to stay informed about the world around her, both near and far, reported events felt like a weight, dragging her steps and sapping her energy. Sometimes it was difficult to get away from the constant barrage of information. It could also be almost addictive as she found herself pulled into a vortex of outrage and trepidation. So this morning she decided to turn it off and head outdoors.

Walking in the woods, no matter the time of year, always gave her a fresh perspective. Because despite the depressingly sad and familiar events that sometimes held her mind hostage, the bush seemed timeless and untouched by human folly. Of course it also depended where she went walking, but that's another story.

It was a cold day and the air felt sharp against her face. Fortunately not much skin was exposed and she wondered how the early settlers had managed before thermal underwear and down jackets. She also wondered about her neighbour Jim. They had enjoyed a meal together over the holidays and he had lingered over her shortbread and coffee longer than expected. That had been a surprise to Monika.

She hadn't expected to enjoy his company as much as she had. And when he phoned the next day to thank her again for her hospitality, she found herself saying they should do it again. He had agreed and said next time he would host. So now she was walking and thinking and wondering where, if anywhere, these visits might be heading.

True they had shared coffee and her homemade cookies on the occasional summer afternoon. But when Jim had arrived at her door all dressed up and shining like a new penny for the holiday meal, it was apparent he was prepared for something special. And through the meal and the conversation that swirled around them for hours, well that had also felt special. They seemed to have lots to talk about. Not to mention the companionable silences that sometimes followed a particularly long conversational episode.

So now Monika walked. The stunning landscape and deep silence was just

what she needed. It was calming and made room for her thoughts. These shifted and swirled in her head like the occasional gust of powdery snow. Was the new year bringing change? Was it possible to expand her world and make room for more? And if so, more what? Had years of living on her own made for the kind of life she now wanted, a life of her own making and choosing? Or had those years pulled her into complacency and stagnation? Deep thoughts for a winter walk in the cold sunshine.

The world outside her door seemed to be spinning increasingly out of control. It was important but also hard to accept at times that she had very little say over much of it. So she told herself to focus on that which was in her power. It might be small things such as how to spend her day, or who to invite for dinner. There was that old saying about being able to choose your friends if not your family. Choices.

At this moment she was choosing to enjoy the winter wonderland all around her and wait to see what might develop with everything else.

## Down



sharon lynch

## Our road



# points of view

## The wolf at the door

**T**HE OTHER day, I was standing at the end of my driveway at 5 a.m. when I looked down the road and saw a wolf loping down the road towards me. It saw me and stopped. Then, we looked at each other briefly and it calmly did a U-turn and slipped off into the woods by the side of the road.

I shrugged. It appeared as if the wolf might have done the same too, before it left.

And that was it.

At times like that, I am more than a little grateful not to be living in the old west. For, if I were, an Indigenous person would have surely witnessed the scene and I would have forever more been known as "Shrugs with Wolf."

Not exactly the most exciting name is it?

This is not so much a commentary on the naming processes used by some Indigenous bands, so much an acknowledgement that I'm not exactly the most exciting guy on the face of the earth.

I tend to be cautious about things. And clearly, I don't excite wolves.

I know what you are thinking. Why didn't I live a little? Why didn't I dance with that wolf?

I mean, sure, it occurred to me to dance – but, I have to be honest, it felt a little too much like plagiarism. Dancing with wolves has been done to death.

Also, Dance with Wolf, which is what I would have been doing, is not all that impressive.

Consider the following scenario:

"Hey everyone, I'd like you to meet Dance with Wolf," someone

might say, if I attended a party in the old west during the time of Kevin Costner movies.

That's when some handsome, unassuming fellow would step out of the shadows and say, "Just one dance? Just one wolf?" and, of course, it would be Kevin Costner himself.

Suddenly, the people who I was being introduced to, would realize that the guy who had more than one dance with multiple wolves was far more interesting. And I would be left standing alone looking for the nearest exit.

That was not my only concern, however.

Look, it's not like I didn't want to dance with the wolf. Heck, I would have jumped at the chance. After all, I'm getting up there in years and my dancing with wolf days are almost done.

But two things prevented me from going for it.

First, I have always been shy. I know some guys would have no problem walking up to a strange wolf and making small talk – perhaps complimenting its teeth or the beauty of its fur – before smoothly asking if it wanted to dance. Sadly, I'm not that guy. Never have been.

I would have probably ended up saying something inadvertently offensive about that whole Little Red Riding Hood incident or mansplained the futility of trying to blow down a house made of bricks.

Even if I hadn't, the bottom line is I am a horrible dancer.

How bad? Well, I would have probably stepped on the wolf's paws several times or embarrassed it with my moves, which essentially consists of one step left, one step right and repeat.

Then with my luck, halfway through the song, someone better at dancing – damn you, Kevin Costner – would have probably asked to cut in and the wolf would have been only too happy to accommodate.

Then I would have been known as "Loser with Wolf," which, let's be honest, is even worse.

I tell you, the whole thing is enough to make a fellow howl.



steve  
galea

## Loon Tales



## pic of the past

**F**rom left to right, Ken Keuans, Dale Robertson, John Smith and Grant Rae pictured alongside the Trike Races Gold Cup trophy. The event was held at the Haliburton carnival in 1975 to raise money for minor hockey. /Photo submitted

## letters to the editor

## Misleading report says nothing we didn't already know

to the Editor,

The article entitled "Report on blue-green algae says 'there is no silver bullet to fix,'" in last week's *Echo* appears to have been commissioned by the Haliburton County Home Builders Association (HCHBA) for the purpose of casting doubt on the need for the draft shoreline preservation bylaw, currently under intense debate across the county.

It's passing strange that the HCHBA felt it necessary to reach out to a biologist living and working in New Zealand to research blue/green algae blooms here in Haliburton County. Some of the most accomplished algae experts anywhere work right next door in Muskoka at the Ministry of the Environment's Dorset Environmental Science Centre. They study lakes in our neck of the woods, their research is world class, and it's available free of charge.

As the title of the *Echo* article emphasizes, this amazingly thin three-page report's main conclusion is that there's no silver bullet for "fixing" blue/green algae outbreaks. But, of course, no one involved in developing or promoting the shoreline preservation draft bylaw has ever made such a ridiculous claim.

Healthy natural shorelines play an essential role in slowing down storm-water runoff and absorbing algae bloom-enabling nutrients, like phosphorus and nitrogen, from septic systems (and lawns) before they leech into our lakes. But healthy natural shorelines are only one piece of the puzzle involved in protecting lake water quality.

We also need to make sure septic systems are functioning properly and well maintained, especially with so many new seasonal residents buying, renovating or replacing older cottages these days. Septic systems require more care and attention than the "flush and forget" systems people are used to in the city. Which is why septic re-inspection programs are another piece of the puzzle.

The HCHBA report claims that blue/green algae has been given a bum wrap in that people only pay attention to it when unsightly and poten-

tially dangerous blooms occur. Blue green algae plays a very useful role in lake ecosystems, except, of course, when it gets out of control. Like the CO2 in our atmosphere that's essential to all life on the planet at "normal" levels, excessive concentrations can have deadly consequences.

Blue/green algal blooms can become home to cyanobacteria capable of releasing toxins into lake water that can actually kill those who drink it.

The good news is that we know a lot about how to minimize the risk of blue/green algal blooms and cyanobacterial outbreaks. Research undertaken by the Dorset Environmental Science Centre and elsewhere has determined that excessive amounts of phosphorus entering the water column from shoreline septic systems is the single most important trigger.

And the most effective way to prevent excessive amounts of bloom-enabling phosphorus from getting into our lakes is to protect as much of our remaining natural shoreline as possible.

The four-year Love Your Lake shoreline assessment project from 2014 - 2018 determined that only 47 per cent of Haliburton's shoreline had enough natural vegetative coverage to absorb nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen before they enter the lake and undermine lake water quality. The draft shoreline preservation bylaw can help protect what remains from further decline but it's only one additional piece of a puzzle that will also have to include encouragement for shoreline landowners to restore the 53 per cent of Haliburton's shoreline that has already been overdeveloped.

The HCHBA report says we don't know everything about blue/green algal blooms and that we should do more monitoring before doing anything.

The truth is we know enough to act now before it's too late to avoid more of the blooms we witnessed last fall.

Terry Moore,  
Halls Lake



# Reach out to help others, help yourself, support mental health

SUE TIFFIN

Staff Reporter

While the new year might have started with hope and a new calendar, it also continues in the second wave of the pandemic that began almost a year ago, a crisis causing stress and anxiety for many residents as they deal with challenges created by a second provincial shut-down, school closures, unemployment, isolation, and loss or anticipatory grief.

Jack Veitch, manager of community engagement and education, Canadian Mental Health Association Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge, said reminders about mental health, that these feelings aren't wrong, and how we can take care of our mental health with resources available are essential to help us get through these times in as healthy a manner as possible.

"People are really struggling," said Veitch, who said in October that crisis call volume in the area had increased, being 30 per cent higher than what crisis intervention and mental health support workers would typically see with a "steady uptick back to March."

"It's the idea that, it's all of these things that we've talked about for decades that are detrimental to mental health, but keep sort of piling on for people, people that might be struggling with isolation, people that might be struggling with job insecurity, financial insecurity, all of these things happening in this sort of compounded fashion, all at once. It can be chaotic," he said. "It can be sort of overwhelming for many."

Veitch said national data shows very plainly that people are experiencing heightened rates of generalized anxiety, and while some people thrive in solitude with time to themselves, many, especially the vulnerable sector, might feel isolated. He urged people to take care of themselves, and others.

"I think about the community of Haliburton and the work I've done there, the work my staff is doing there," he said. "In my opinion it's a tight-knit community that comes together, supports each other. There are supports available, there are resources available. If I could scream anything from the roof-tops, it's reach out. If you're struggling, you don't have to struggle alone or silently."

The factors potentially that lead toward a person experiencing a mental health concern or mental health illness are often environmental factors, situational life stresses that are happening, said Veitch, including job loss, financial insecurity, isolation. There's also genetic predisposition – people might be predisposed to mental illness, much the same as physical illness. Additionally, a traumatic event, much like the pandemic for some, or work or job life stress can be factors as well. Any of these factors might affect a person in a different way.

"Maybe a person who is experiencing social isolation, that isolation might be really damaging to person A, but to person B, they can sort of manage it well," said Veitch. "But when we're seeing all of those things happening at once, it's sort of like we're getting multiple shots, multiple ticks against us, one after the other after the other."

The same is true in recovery – something that helps one person might not be as effective for another.

"The most successful recovery plans are always person, patient, client-centered," said Veitch. "They're person-centred plans. I'm at the centre of my recovery plan, I'm involved in it, and I believe in it and I follow through. I could be using the wide gambit of making sure I'm getting adequate sleep, making sure I'm being active and exercising, making sure I'm eating properly, making sure I'm still connecting with people in a safe and responsible way, socializing accordingly, I think a sense of purpose."

Veitch said that might seem vague, but he thinks of it like this: "I'm sure you have people in your life or you may know people that, pre-pandemic, every morning, they woke up and they went to the local gyms or the local coffee shop and they just had a coffee, every morning. That was their routine. And that sense of purpose, was really actually integral to their wellness. If you think, well, that sounds silly, think of it like this: I had to make sure that I got up that morning, that I brushed my teeth, got myself dressed, had a quick bite and then I'm out the door on time. All the little things that came with just making sure I'm on time to have my morning coffee. That sense of purpose. And what we try to instill in people is, trying to make sure I'm doing these things, built around myself, my own investment, in a new way. I can't go to the coffee shop, can I arrange that every morning at 8 o'clock, I call my old buddy I used to meet at McKeck's or wherever and say, hey, let's have our morning coffee together and just catch up and see what's going on. Or what can we do together that's going to keep us well but in a new way."



Living through the challenges of a pandemic can increase challenges with mental health, relationships, addiction or work life. Residents are asked to reach out for professional support for themselves or loved ones who might be struggling at this time./Photo supplied by Canadian Mental Health Association Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge

At this time, it's essential to remember that recovery is possible, said Veitch, though it might look different – rather than working through anxiety or depression using typical means of walking with a friend for an outing, for example, maybe people might call a friend, or have a socially distanced visit outside, in accordance with recommendations from public health agencies.

"Can I adapt?," said Veitch. "I can't go to the gym, but I can still exercise. There are still things I can do to be well."

Veitch reiterated that it's OK to experience and acknowledge feelings that might not feel great.

"Dealing with anger, frustration, sadness, those aren't wrong emotions," he said. "There's sometimes that thought, that if I'm feeling angry or frustrated, I have to get rid of that. That's a bad emotion. It's not wrong or a bad emotion if I'm feeling it. Sometimes sitting with that and honouring and understanding that is important, it's valuable. But what I reflect back to people ... there's a difference between feeling frustrated with the situation, or frustrated or angry with the world, and striking somebody at the supermarket. There's a difference. If I'm seeing those feelings becoming really disruptive, that's what I want to sort of identify, and work on managing those more appropriately, that self-regulation piece. Feeling angry and sad and frustrated, that's not bad – it's not fun, often, but they're important."

He also said it's important to acknowledge feelings to better understand where they come from, and to be able to work through them in self-reflection.

"People often think of mental distress as the sad, the tearful, the withdrawn, sort of away somewhere quietly sad and fearful. Sometimes distress is angry, it's frustrated," he said. "Think about a time perhaps when you were really anxious, I can think of myself, working from home here, I've got 1,000 e-mails coming in, I've got important phone calls, and I've got my six-year-old, who's like 'Dad, turn on the Nintendo!'" The Nintendo might become the focus of conflict.

"That's not that I'm angry," said Veitch. "But there's that anxiety, that anxiety is manifesting itself as anger."

And with self-reflection, Veitch said, the stress can be addressed: "Am I really this angry right now, or do I really just need to take a deep breath, slow my system down and acknowledge, OK, I can deal with that in a bit, once I deal with my other responsibilities first. And so again, reminding people that that feeling of anger is really a reflection of anxiety and stress. Not bad, but again, it needs to be mindful to reflect on."

At a time when emotions are high between friends and family, people online, even strangers in line at the store, it's also important to set personal boundaries and recognize what is in our lives that might not be helpful or beneficial, so that we can calm it and set limits for ourselves.

"Is it wrong to set limits as a result with people in my life? Absolutely not. I'll always say, I personally, I don't think anybody has the authority to tell another what their boundaries should be. For me to come in and say, you can only accept this amount from your family, or this amount from your friends, I don't have that right. What I often encourage people is to start reflecting internally. What are my boundaries or limits? What would I accept or not accept as appropriate behaviour, a way that I'm talked to or addressed, a conversation I would engage in? Starting to reflect on those personal boundaries internally is going to be really important here ... The most effective boundaries are always very, very clear,

and they're very, very consistent. Clarity and consistency will always lead the most effective boundaries in any relationship."

A 30-day mute of friends or family on social media is always an option, he said.

And while Veitch stresses a positive mindset is always important, it's important to not diminish the thoughts and feelings of real world situations – so considering what is in our control and what isn't can be helpful for anxious feelings.

"Think about how much of that anxiety is related to wanting to control things I can't," he said. "I want the pandemic to be over, I want to just do something to make it over because I don't want to feel this way anymore. I want to just have it go back to the way it was, or just that sense of grasping for control can lead to really unhealthy coping mechanisms. And so, again, that idea of focus on what I can control – and what I can't control, at least for most of us, is our day-to-day life. I'm going to control when I get up in the morning, and when I go to sleep, unless I'm a new parent. I'm going to control my sleep cycles as best I can, my diet as best I can, my exercise, my socialization, the boundaries or limits I set with others, all of those things. Let's focus on what I can control. Because if we get down to that snowball effect of all of the things I cannot control, it can potentially become really overwhelming for us."

While the pandemic is heightening these feelings for many, Veitch said looking after our mental health in any situation always comes back to the same factors.

"If you asked me five years ago, and said, list five things you need to do to take care of mental health, I would have said socialization, sleep, diet, physical activity, having a sense of purpose – hobbies or interest. I'm going to give you the same list again, how we roll this out might look a little different."

And though these ideas might seem obvious to some, looking at why and how they are helpful and how they might help our own individual situations can help us put them into play.

"It's so funny, people know that it's important to eat well to be healthy," said Veitch. "Well, let's really break that down to mental health. Why is it important to have a healthy diet? Well, why is it important to limit things like sugars and caffeine? Sugars and caffeine are stimulants, they speed up and excite my brain. They make it work quicker. When I'm feeling anxiety or anxious feelings, my brain is moving very quickly, that caffeine is speeding up that already sped-up brain. The diet is sort of contributing to anxious feelings, actively. It comes back to the simple message of diet, and reminding people that, oh yeah, quite frankly, scientifically, my diet is impacting my brain's chemistry."

That being said, chocolate or caffeine don't need to be excluded completely, necessarily, Veitch said – everything in moderation, with an awareness of when it might become not healthy or not helpful.

Veitch stressed the importance of reaching out in a safe way, getting through the pandemic together.

"We're going to get through this as a community, by supporting each other," he said. "If I've got someone in my life that I think might be isolated, that older adult or that person who lives by themselves, giving them a phone call once a week isn't going to do any harm, in fact, it's going to do a lot of good."

Free, professional, confidential crisis support for anyone struggling with mental health, relationships, addiction or work life is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling Four County Crisis at 705-745-6484 or 1-866-995-9933. Visit <https://cmhahkpr.ca/> for more information.

## For local support:

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**Haliburton Highlands Health Services**  
705-286-2140

**Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health**  
Unit - 1-866-888-4577  
Fourcast - 705-876-1292

**Community Living Trent Highlands - 705-328-0502**  
**Canadian Mental Health Association Haliburton,**  
**Kawartha, Pine Ridge - 705-748-6711 or**  
Toll Free: 1-866-990-9956

**Haliburton Highlands Mental Health Services**  
705-286-4575

**Tri-County Support Services - 705-876-9245**  
**Five County Children's Centre Haliburton and**  
**Minden - 705-286-0737**

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Highlands resident Corina Mansfield provides a helping hand to her youngest daughter Pearl, five, while her seven-year-old daughter Ruby climbs up an incline on Friday, Jan. 8 at Glebe Park in Haliburton. Mansfield said it's her first year of Nordic skiing and that her daughters are registered for the youth Nordic program. /DARREN LUM Staff

# Record numbers for Nordic ski club

DARREN LUM

Staff Reporter

It's only when you see the parking lots that you realize how popular Nordic skiing is in the Highlands this season, owed in part to the provincial lockdown said the president of the Haliburton Highlands Nordic Club and Ski Association.

Otherwise it's easy to get lost in your thoughts and become fully immersed in the beauty of the surroundings while you're out gliding and skating on one of the three trails located at Glebe Park, Twin Lakes or Moosewoods, said president Thom Lambert.

Over the holidays, the ski trails saw an unprecedented number of visitors to the 36 kilometres of trails.

"We have never seen use like that," he said. "Except maybe for a really, lovely, sunny, minus four [degree Celsius] Family Day weekend. I know all three ski areas we broke records for attendance. We broke records for ticket sales, but the amazing thing is ... you ski out here and think, 'Oh, my gosh there's nobody here and you go out and there's 15 cars in the parking lot. The beautiful thing about cross-country ski trails is that they just automatically distance people.'"

He called this year's overall numbers for season and day-time users as "astronomical."

There are just under 600 season pass holders, which is 50 per cent greater than last year, he said.

He adds there were days in the past when four cars felt like a lot of visitors, but this year there has been upwards of 40 cars seen at parking lots.

Just after the province announced the lockdown, the club's board, he said, consulted with the health unit and decided it was safe to operate. This lockdown has created a recreational gap for people here in the Highlands, he adds.

"It's a great service to the community for people to have a way to

get out, especially since downhill ski areas are closed. Downhill ski areas are incredibly important to families and that kind of created a big gap in the outdoor recreation field in the county," he said.

Lambert said popularity for all outdoor activities is approaching the heyday of the 1990s. He calls it a resurgence and could lead to a bright future for Nordic skiing here, as more and more people discover it during this lockdown that has limited activities.

"I think it is going to grow the club over the long-term. I don't think this is a one or two year kind of blip. We're creating a lot of really, really happy customers," he said.

This is owed to the club's volunteers.

Up to this point in the year, the president said, the dozens of volunteers that make the club what it is have already invested more than 700 hours of their time, which includes grooming trails, marketing and processing membership purchases. To put it in context, volunteers would normally spend upwards of 1,700 hours of time for the club and this total will most likely increase by the end of the season. With the added traffic, grooming was a constant to ensure the quality of the trails is maintained. Lambert points out the high standards for trail conditions is all about making the season pass holder happy and will in turn ensure a strong future where the week day user can be confident the condition on a Wednesday will match that of a Saturday.

More memberships has also meant more work. He credits membership coordinator Joleen Thomas and volunteer Brian Hill, who helps with the system used for processing payments. Some of this increase is expected in December, but this year there were families, who would have spent their time downhill skiing, but chose to go Nordic skiing and picked up family memberships in January, which is normally slower.

He said this growth is being han-

see LOCAL page 14

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## Lakefront Property Owners,

Are you aware of the proposed Shoreline Bylaw that the County of Haliburton is currently moving forward with? If not, please feel free to go to the Haliburton County Home Builders Associations website to view the latest draft. Here are a few points that should interest you if you own lakefront property:

- The County Council is recommending that our local municipalities no longer sell the Shore Road Allowance to lakefront property owners.
- The objectives of this bylaw is to achieve 75% natural shoreline including undeveloped lots and it states that the current average for Haliburton County lakes is 47% natural shoreline.
- County Council feels that it is imperative to have this by-law passed by Spring 2021 even though we are in the midst of a global pandemic. A bylaw of this magnitude should include public townhall meetings and this is not possible in these times.

***If you have any questions, we at the HCHBA recommend that you write, email, or call your municipal elected officials with your comments or concerns. The Draft Bylaw and Questions and Answers can be found on our website under 'Resources' at [www.hchba.ca](http://www.hchba.ca)***



**Haliburton County**  
Home Builders Association  
[www.hchba.ca](http://www.hchba.ca)

**#Building with the Environment in Mind**



# Haliburton represented in All-Around Champion reality TV show

DARREN LUM

Staff Reporter

Like a veteran movie star, Evan Armstrong already knows how to tease a show since his claim to TV fame after being one of 10 competitors in the second season of the reality television show, All-Around Champion.

"You get hooked. It's a competition. In spots it's a little bit dramatic ... my grandma watched it and she found she really got connected to the people in the show. She had a personal connection with them and at the end there is a big surprise, so you got to watch and see that," the 15-year-old Haliburton teen said, grinning.

The show available to view through [www.tvokids.com](http://www.tvokids.com) is about gaining new perspectives, whether it's teaching others and learning about patience to learning a new sport while dealing with anxieties related to pushing past boundaries.

Armstrong, who had an edge going in with experience downhill skiing and snowboarding, spent two months last year sequestered away from family, except for one weekend in a large house in Alliston.

They came from all over North America, competing in 10 winter sports over 10 weeks looking to gain the most points, including a final surprise challenge combining several contests. Each of them had a particular expertise in one of the sports and coached the others for three days before competing against one another in a challenge.

The Grade 10 student at Lakefield College School helped to coach Nordic skiing with Beckie Scott, an Olympic gold med-



Haliburton's Evan Armstrong spoke about his experience, as a competitor on the television show, All-Around Champion. Watch him and the other contestants at [www.tvokids.com](http://www.tvokids.com). /DARREN LUM Staff

and what it means to him, and how much work is required to produce a television show.

"Now I see why actors get paid so much," he said, smiling. "A lot of work goes in to TV and it's not just the people you see on camera and the cameramen. There's so many more people involved in creating a TV show or a movie. People who look after the actors, actresses."

Produced for a North American audience, the field of 10 teens included five Canadians and five Americans, divided equally by gender. Shooting and everything related, from being interviewed to travelling was a full day affair, starting close to 7 a.m.

Each week there were four days of shooting for the 22 30-minute episodes and then two days off to work out at a nearby gym, catch up on school work or relax. Evan said his teachers were accommodating and gave him extra work to complete without any new lessons.

Although filming for the show only included the interview portion with Evan at his home and at Glebe Park, the teenager said the first season included filming at the Minden Whitewater Preserve in Minden and J. Douglas Hodgson Elementary School in Haliburton.

Evan's father Mike Armstrong said his son had looked forward to being part of the show and that it came about because of his Nordic coach at Kawartha Nordic, who recommended his son and did much of the groundwork for the application and interviews.

"I think I would have to say Evan developed a new respect for athletes in other sports and other sports in general throughout this process," he said.

See the episodes at [www.tvokids.com](http://www.tvokids.com).

allist.

He discovered he knew more than he thought and gained a greater appreciation for the foundational skills of his sport. Teaching highlighted how patience is an important aspect to coaching effectively.

The other sports included, speed skating, figure skating, snowboarding, mogul

skiing, ski jumping, ice climbing, luge, dog mushing and curling.

Overall, he enjoyed his experience despite the waiting around between interviews and setups for shots and not being able to Nordic ski more than the four days.

It taught him the importance of sport

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# Hall of Fame working toward fulfilling vision

DARREN LUM  
Staff Reporter

It's no surprise that COVID-19 put a delay on the plans for the Haliburton Highlands Hall of Fame's first induction ceremony that was originally planned for

October of 2020.

Like the high-level athletes they want to recognize, the people behind the hall of fame have continued to work towards their goal to recognize the men and women who have contributed to the Highlands community or have represented the area with character and athletic achievement, whether as a professional or as an amateur.

Scott LaRue, chairman of the hall of fame's management committee, said in an interview several weeks ago though they've been set back by a year, he is eyeing the future with optimism and holds true to the original vision that remains at the foundation of the effort, which began close to three years ago.

"We want to identify and honour the people that actually represented Haliburton County in sports in an extraordinary way. They're not an average person. They're a person that has excelled in sports in the county, male or female in whatever sport," he said.

Corroborating what individuals achieved will depend on word-of-mouth and from newspaper articles. The categories for inductees will be athlete, builder and teams. Inductions will be every two years. The first group of chosen inductees were supposed to have been inducted in October with a ceremony held at the Pinestone Resort and Conference Centre in Haliburton.

LaRue said the first inductees have been chosen, but he wasn't divulging who specifically was supposed to have been recognized. He offered this hint.

"It's fairly probable, let's put it that way, that anybody who has a picture on the [A.J. LaRue Arena] will be inducted. Anybody that has made it to as far as they can go in their sport, whether it's amateur or professional. If they get to the top [coming] out of a little town like this then they're probably well-qualified to be an inductee," he said.

The painted murals on the arena LaRue referenced are of retired CFL player Mike Bradley, retired NHL players Ron Stackhouse, Bernie Nicholls, Cody Hodgson and current NHL player Matt Duchene. LaRue also named his father for who the arena is named after for his contributions to hockey and the community, and Olympian hurdler Lesley Tashlin, who competed at the summer Olympics in Atlanta in 1996.

LaRue didn't specify how many inductees were chosen for the first year, but said there will be some who will be inducted posthumously. All living inductees must have been retired for five years, or if they've moved to the county must have been a resident for the past five years.

"They got to have earned the right to be in the Hall of Fame of Haliburton not only by being a professional in some other place or home, they got to show they are willing to work in the county in sports," he said.

Since this effort began, the hall of fame has always planned to use the auditorium space on the second floor of the A.J. LaRue Arena.

The hall of fame became a member organization of the Haliburton County Community Co-operative in the spring of 2019.

As a result, the co-operative committee's Jim Blake the hall of fame committee and acts as representative for the co-operative.

LaRue said there are benefits to joining the co-operative such as being covered for liability insurance and they provide \$500 seed money. Also, he adds Blake is an asset to have on the committee because of his experience and knowledge of the area.

“

*It's fairly probable, let's put it that way, that anybody who has a picture on the [A.J. LaRue Arena] will be inducted. Anybody that has made it to as far as they can go in their sport, whether it's amateur or professional.*

— Scott LaRue

The expected success and the continued drive to see the hall of fame come to fruition comes down to the people behind it, serving on the board and on the sub-committees.

"It's all pulling together towards next October so you [might] run into the odd roadblock. The people we have, you couldn't get a group of better individuals as far as knowledgeable and willing to spend time and so on and so forth," he said. "Overall, I'm pretty satisfied with it other than the interruption with COVID-19, which set us back a year."

The hall of fame committee includes chairman, LaRue, secretary treasurer, Roger Dart, Dysart et al Deputy Mayor Pat Kennedy, members Roger Trull, Jim Bradley, Kelly Mitchell, Don Popple, Paul Morissette, and Blake.

LaRue said the hall of fame website is close to being active, and a logo is currently in the process of being completed. These will be based on other examples taken from other halls of fame throughout Ontario. Many of these action items are being executed by the hall's sub-committees for induction, fundraising, website, sports history, selection, nomination, induction plaques and logo.

Also, discussions are ongoing related to the inductee plaques, which will include a picture of the individual or teams, complemented with a write-up of their career and why he/she/they have been inducted. The plaque sub-committee will decide what the plaque's final form takes, he said.

This hall isn't just about Haliburton, but is for all of the Highlands.

Despite what some might think is a Haliburton-centric initiative, LaRue said, he welcomes people from all over the Highlands, including Minden to join the effort to bringing the hall of fame to life.

"We haven't forgotten about Minden at all. It's just that I started this organization and my idea was to always have it in Haliburton," he said.

Currently, the call for sports artifacts is on hold until the venue is secured and ready for display.

The aim is to have memorabilia that is relevant to the inductees put on display.

"It will be a rotating type of thing," he said. "Every two years we'll rotate the memorabilia so people won't be looking at the same thing forever."

LaRue hopes this hall of fame will be good for the community and for visitors.

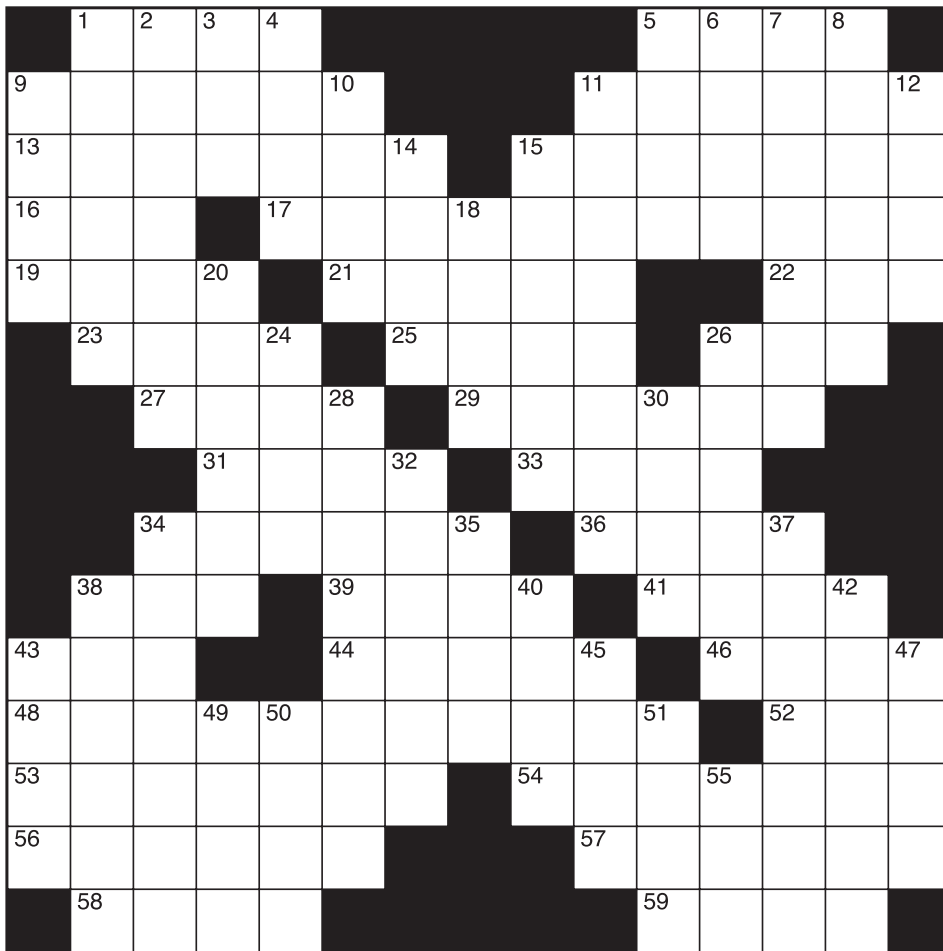
"Have people come into Haliburton and want to take a look at the people that were prominent in the sports world of Haliburton County. Basically it's another attraction for tourists and people that come up here," he said.

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## CLUES ACROSS

- Composed
- Lesotho currency
- Ethnic group associated with Hungarians
- Gains knowledge of
- Gradual destruction
- Purchase
- Pharaoh of lower Egypt
- Where you're going
- The 6th letter of the Greek alphabet
- Fishing net
- Midway between south and southeast
- A way to sort
- CCC
- Popular sports podcast (abbr.)
- Discount
- Consumes tobacco
- A way to run
- Popular musical awards show
- Pertains to the male sexual organ
- Supplements with difficulty
- Green veggie
- Deep-bodied freshwater fish

## CLUES DOWN

- Progressive decay of a bone or tooth
- Burrowing rodents
- French/Belgian river
- A professional cleaner
- A Russian river
- Kiln
- True statements
- Most private
- French city
- Masses of fish eggs
- Apart from others
- Monetary unit of Samoa
- Nanosecond

## CLUES ACROSS

- Holy fire
- Usually has a lid
- Being of use or service
- Have a yen for
- Unknowingness
- Dry white wine drink
- Unwinds
- Traveling by sea
- Outdoor entertaining areas
- Stringed instruments
- Redgrave, actress
- Moves earth
- Film
- Men's fashion accessories
- Flowering shrub
- North Carolina university
- Former monetary unit of Spain
- Foodies
- New Zealand parrot
- Makes very happy
- A payment required for not fulfilling a contract
- Emerald Isle
- The act of terminating someone's employment
- Gland in some mammals
- Commoner
- Large animals
- Belch
- Employee stock ownership plan
- Work units
- Wagon
- Nerve fiber
- Proclaimed
- Japanese delicacy

Answers on page 13



# Clearing the air about aerosol cleaning for COVID–19

DARREN LUM

Staff Reporter

With so much information out there in the public pertaining to what to do or not to do to protect against contracting the coronavirus, it’s difficult to know where to turn. Sometimes it comes down to doing what you believe is the best practice.

Having aerosol cleaning performed at Haliburton County’s community radio station is about making her volunteers and staff feel safe and secure when they are inside, said Canoe FM radio’s manager Roxanne Casey.

She said she may not fully understand the scientific nuances behind the practice that started in March, it doesn’t take away its importance for the station and its 110 volunteers, who work to operate the community hub of communication.

“All the volunteers feel pretty good about it. So if it does what it says it does and we’re keeping the volunteers ... [feeling] safe coming in here, then the board said let’s do it,” she said.

She adds the benefit of this kind of weekly application that does little to disrupt the station’s operation is how it can get into areas that someone can’t physically reach. This helps to disinfect the station’s equipment, and high touch areas such as the door knobs and kitchen cabinet handles.

This is in addition to regular weekly conventional cleaning of the floors, bathroom and kitchen, and other COVID-19 protocols, such as using disposable microphone covers for each person instead of the sponge-like covers, glass partitions in the broadcast booth, a “ticket wicket” at the front door to protect volunteers and to greet visitors, and a table where anyone entering the station is required to sanitize their hands.

Thus far the station is not expecting an end to the service performed by Rick Stamp, owner of Stamp Carpet and Duct Cleaning.

Stamp who has more than 25 years of experience in Haliburton County, said he uses the disinfecting product BioCleanz, which disinfects the air and surfaces using a machine to deliver a fine mist.

“It surrounds all kinds of surfaces or anything, as opposed to just wiping them down. It’s a mist and fog that hangs around a bit, killing bacteria and viruses while it’s doing it,” he said.

He adds it lasts for 24 hours.

Among the benefits, he said, is how it doesn’t require wiping and can be used with people around, including computers and microphones.

Per the Canadian-based company website, “BioCleanz is non-corrosive, non-flammable, non-chlorinating, phosphate-free, hypo-allergenic and a true biodegradable product.”

It claims a “broad-spectrum disinfectant with a 99.9999 per cent efficacy.”

From a personal trial at his own home conducted before he started to offer the service, he said it leaves little odour compared to similar products he tried and claims it is not harmful to people or animals, having conducted the trial with his dog present.

Originally, he said, he had been using BioCleanz during duct cleaning operations to kill bacteria, but then added the service to address open spaces after the first provincial lock down on April 20. The demand for this

service has doubled since then, he adds.

Besides the station, he said, he has performed the misting in private residences such as house and cottages. It’s often an add-on to duct and upholstery cleaning. Generally, aerosol cleaning for open areas isn’t new to Stamp, who said he’s performed such actions to address mould. His trust in the product is rooted in its ties to its inventor, who is a university professor, and because of how it has been used by the RCMP and businesses in British Columbia.

Many people in the Highlands, he said, aren’t even aware of the aerosol option.

“People are just not aware of it. I put it on my Facebook page and I have it in the paper. I don’t really want to push it or anything like that. I just want to offer it, that’s all,” he said.

At the health facilities in Minden and Haliburton, president and CAO Carolyn Plummer said a misting system is used. This is implemented between patients, following the discharge and prior to admitting a new patient, also at long-term care homes between residents, and is performed during the deep cleaning of transport vehicles, including surface cleaning using a disinfectant solution.

“The misting system we use, called “Nocospray,” is a vaporized hydrogen peroxide based disinfection system. It needs to be used in an enclosed space to be effective, and the space needs to remain closed for an extended period of time for the system to work. We do not use it in common spaces, as they are not enclosed and it is not possible to close them off for extended periods of time,” she wrote in an email.

This work is carried out by support staff, who deserve credit for taking on the additional task.

She said it’s important to recognize and appreciate the “critical role that our housekeeping team plays to keep our environment safe for all patients, residents, clients,

visitors, and staff.”

Since the pandemic began, she adds, there has been an increase in the working hours for housekeeping staff, which has occurred around the clock.

In common spaces, there is frequent wiping down of surfaces, using the solution called Oxivor, which is a ready-to-use hydrogen peroxide based disinfectant cleaner. Plummer said both Nocospray and Oxivor have been in use at HHHS for the past several years.

Haliburton-based doctor Norm Bottum, who has been in practice for 33 years, said for home owners thorough cleaning is likely enough.

“The best cleaning is with elbow grease, wiping down surfaces with soap and water or a disinfectant will do,” he wrote in an email, referencing Up TO Date, a subscription medical online resource for doctors in the Ontario Ministry of Health. “That would include wiping down after using an aerosol spray. Surfaces that are porous or fabric such as common furniture coverings and carpeting are virtually impossible to disinfect. That is why all hospital surfaces are non porous including mattress cover, furniture and floors. Hospitals will use a disinfectant spray or fog in rooms to get to difficult to reach areas. Some aerosols are toxic and need to be read well before use for safe handling. There is no need to attempt to clean the air. Proper ventilation is adequate.”

From Health Canada “surfaces frequently touched with hands are most likely to be contaminated. These include doorknobs, handrails, elevator buttons, light switches, cabinet handles, faucet handles, tables, counter tops and electronics.”

It continues stating there is evidence to suggest the virus causing COVID-19 “can live on objects and surfaces from a few hours to days, depending on the type of surface.”

## Health unit produces COVID–19 information videos

A series of videos featuring acting local medical officer of health Dr. Ian Gemmill have been uploaded to the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District health unit YouTube channel.

“The health unit produced these videos as a way to help share messaging from Dr. Gemmill with our communities,” said Chandra Tremblay, HKPRD health unit spokesperson. “The health unit has always used video as a way to share information, either through social media or our website, and we are hoping to do more videos with Dr. Gemmill in the next few months while he is our acting medical officer of health.”

Here, the four videos have been transcribed.

**Video title: COVID-19 shutdown is necessary**

Video description: Acting local medical officer of health Dr. Ian Gemmill says the current Ontario-wide shutdown is required to get COVID-19 under control, and allow for broad vaccination.

“...there’s a couple of things about this virus. Number one, when a fully susceptible population encounters a new virus, everyone eventually is going to get it unless we can intervene in a definitive way. One way to intervene is to lock things down. I think we’re now in a position where our health teams are telling us that if we don’t turn things around, they’re going to have to make some tough decisions about who gets an ICU bed and who doesn’t, and that’s really what we want to avoid.

So I think actually the most important part of the lockdown is not the commercial part. I think the most important part is the social part. Don’t mix between households.

And I hope that by next spring when the virus settles down for the summer, which it will do to some degree, and when we have a safe and effective vaccine that is available to everybody, we will in a very structured, and logical and organized way be able to get everybody who wants this vaccine immunized so that this time next year, we won’t be facing another lockdown.”

**Video title: COVID-19: Behaviours have consequences**

Video description: Gathering together ... not wearing masks ... these behaviours will have serious consequences for our community. “We have to pull together,” to prevent COVID-19, urges Dr. Gemmill.

“It’s not just me and you who are involved here. This is a community-wide situation and the decisions that you and I make about our own health and about protecting ourselves has consequences for everybody else in the community. If I, for example, decide I don’t like masks, or I’m going to go and gather with people, and I get sick, through those behaviours, I am going to spread

this virus so that eventually those people in long-term care are going to have negative effects because of my behaviour even though I don’t see this as an issue for me. So, we have to pull together, you know, as the old saying, ‘if we don’t pull together we’re going to pull apart.’ And I think that that is very true in our response to this virus as well.”

**Video title: Do our part; stay apart!**

Video description: Dr. Gemmill urges everyone not to gather during provincial COVID-19 shutdown. This action is essential if we want to get back to normal – sooner than later.

“I really hope that the lockdown gives people the understanding, and I hope that the politicians and the decision makers and the public health professionals across the system keep repeating this don’t gather, don’t gather, don’t gather, because this is what will cause a virus to spread. And we’ve got that vaccine, it’s so close almost that we can taste it, let’s not blow it by bad behaviour now, because in a few months we’ll be able to get back to normal I hope, I really do.”

**Video title: COVID-19: ‘Blown away’ by vaccine**

Video description: Dr. Gemmill explains how the COVID-19 vaccine will be rolled out in 2021, why it’s being done this way, and why getting vaccinated is the key to a return to normal.

“I’m actually blown away by the fact that we have – so quickly – have safe and effective vaccines against coronavirus. We’ve got a mechanism now through the hospital program to get healthcare workers immunized and that’s the first step, because they’re the first people who need to be immunized, because they’re the ones who are actually knowingly facing this virus every single day. So once we’ve got that vaccine we’re going to be able to go into longterm care. And why is that important? Because that’s where the deaths have been, that’s where the hospitalizations have been, that’s where the complications have been, and if we’re going to protect the vulnerable, that’s the next step, is to get those people protected. And having a vaccine in place and through it [we] are not just protecting individuals but diminishing the circulation of the virus in the community, that’s what’s going to be the key, A) to protecting our hospital system, but also to letting us get back to normalcy in our lives. And that’s where we all want to be, to me that’s the goal of this whole thing, is to get back so we can live our lives as we had before.”

To watch these videos on COVID-19 information or other health information resources produced by the local health unit, visit <https://www.youtube.com/user/HKPRDHU>.

## CROSSWORD ANSWERS

	S	G	I	D			N	N	A	L	
S	O	N	A	I	P		S	O	I	T	A
G	N	I	T	A	O	B	S	E	X	A	E
R	I	K		S	S	E	N	E	R	A	W
E	H	C	A		E	L	I	T	U		N
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	I	T	O	L				W	L	A	C



# Keeping the Plouffe family in our thoughts

community news  
west guilford

Eleanor Cooper  
754-2278

Last year on Boxing Day, Mike Chumbley hosted a family toboggan party on the hill by his place. Laura, Dan and Michael were all together for the time. Ideal conditions made for a lot of fun for the day, and a good time to remember. All were carefully masked, the four of Angela and Mike, two of Dan & Cathy, and two of Laura and Kirk.

Darko Knezevic who has suffered a stroke several months ago is now at the Dick Henderson cottage and is undergoing much therapy at various locations: Huntsville, Peterborough and Minden. We wish him perseverance as he continues the long road to recovery.

Our hearts go out to Pastor Brian Plouffe and his wife Dianne in the grievous loss of their 34-year-old daughter. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, few could attend the funeral on Jan. 4, but many of the West Guilford Baptist Church congregation gathered on the grounds of the community centre in support of their beloved couple who have, and are continuing to offer spiritual support over this difficult time.

Best wishes are continuing to come in for my sister, Kathleen Owens, who had the misfortune to fall in the house and is recuperating from partial hip surgery at Ross Memorial Hospital.

I pricked up my ears when I heard a couple of Guilford names mentioned on the Canoe 100.9. I'm sorry I didn't make note of the recording, but each of the names was familiar in Donna Upton vocal and Darcy Stamp on fiddle.



## On the right track

Riders Josh Baker negotiates a turn on his motorcycle with studded tires with Steve Stiles trailing behind on Saturday, Jan. 9 on Grass Lake in Haliburton. Stiles, the ice track maker and ice racing enthusiast of Haliburton wants to grow the sport. He welcomes people to contact him about trying ice racing at s.stiles@live.ca./DARREN LUM Staff



Rider Doug Wright of Minden slides his motorcycle with studded tires around a corner.

# Local cross country skiing trails 'much busier' this season

from page 9

dled without issue and that it's owed to the 40 volunteers, who make everything happen.

"The reality is we have a bunch of people that love helping people get on skis. And for us there really hasn't been a down side," he said.

Up until 2015, when the membership was half of what it is, the club was run for decades by the local lodges and included an extensive trail network of more than 250 kilometres, encouraging lodge-to-lodge skiing. Five years ago the club's constitution was changed to enable the association to be a skier-led organization instead of a business-led one. Before the change, skiers as a group had just one vote pertaining to board decisions while business owners each had a vote.

Nordic skiing provides more than just a physical benefit to people, Lambert said.

"The main thing for us is we truly believe that access to outdoor recreation is as big a part of people's health, especially their mental health, as being safe and doing the right things in terms of COVID-19 protocols and social distancing. All the research says that and that's one of the reasons that the province left cross-country ski trails and hiking trails and skating trails and toboggan hills [to continue]. They want to keep that stuff open so people can get outside and get some fresh air and get some sunshine," he said.

He adds getting outside is even more important at this time of year when compared to the first provincial lockdown during the spring, when conditions included warmer temperatures and conditions that don't demand much effort to dress for in contrast to winter, which is

more demanding.

"For us, we didn't do any lobbying. We didn't do nothing like that. We just waited to see what the province said and the province said right from the very beginning that cross-country trails are allowed to open," he said.

The club, he said, is following COVID-19 protocols for an "unsupervised, outdoor activity."

Lambert pointed out the club is encouraging doubling distances between people, so rather than one they want two metres, or two ski pole lengths to account for people that are exercising, and that there shouldn't be gatherings of any kind, whether in a parking lot or on the trail.

Part of the COVID-19 protocols the club is exercising is closing potential trail destination sites such as warming huts or potential gathering places such as picnic areas. For the first time, e-transfers were accepted for payment to purchase trail passes so people can't run the risk of assembling at trail heads to physically pay for a trail pass.

Lambert said the message from the club during this lockdown to skiers is: "You come. You get your ski in and you go home."

## Popular Jack Rabbit youth program start is delayed because of lockdown

As part of the lockdown restrictions related to group gatherings, the start of the Jack Rabbit program that was supposed to have already begun has been delayed for a few weeks.

There are 69 youth registered for this year, which is a 30 per cent increase over two years ago. Lambert believes participation in all outdoors sports is higher because of COVID-19. The club actually imposed a cap at 69 because of how many volunteers were available to help with instructing students at program. There are 10 youth on a waiting list.

He said the plan is to start the program Saturday after the lockdown ends, but it's a wait and see situation now.

"If we get the OK we're all setup ... have everything poised and have everything ready to go we'll launch the next weekend that's our plan," he said.

Lambert thanks the public for the support and wants to ensure the public acknowledge the efforts of the club's team of volunteers.

"Every single year we run into skiers, especially visitors, but also people right here in the county that think our ski trails are run by municipal government or by the county government. I think probably the most important thing for people to realize in the county just like the Haliburton County Snowmobile Association we rely really, really heavily on volunteers to create amazing infrastructure for the county and I think that's the most important thing to take away is that people are seeing that and recognizing it and thinking, 'wow, what a great resource when I can't really do any other kind of organized sports.'"

Volunteers with a variety of skills, whether it's Nordic skiing experience to teach or to just pick up sticks, are welcomed and anyone interested in volunteering can contact us at info@skihaliburton.com.

For more information on skiing or the club see website (www.skihaliburton.com).



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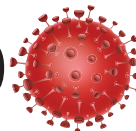
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### Willison, Dennis

Of St. Thomas passed away at his late residence on Friday, January 8th, 2021 at the age of 74.

Beloved husband and best friend of Christina (nee Kennaway) Willison of over 51 years. Dearly loved father of Tanya Goddard (Craig), Travis Willison (Sandra) and Brian Willison (Rebecca). Adored grandfather of Daniel, Mackenzie, Emma, Olivia, Samuel and Oliver. Dear brother of Wayne (Molly) and Paul (Daphne). He will be sadly missed by a number of nieces and nephews.

Dennis was born in Galt, Ontario on April 19th, 1946, son of the late Harold William and Carmel (Baker) Willison.

Due to COVID-19, a private visitation will be held on Tuesday and a private funeral service will be held on Wednesday at Williams Funeral Home, 45 Elgin St., St. Thomas with interment in Aylmer Cemetery. Remembrances may be made to the Canadian Cancer Society.



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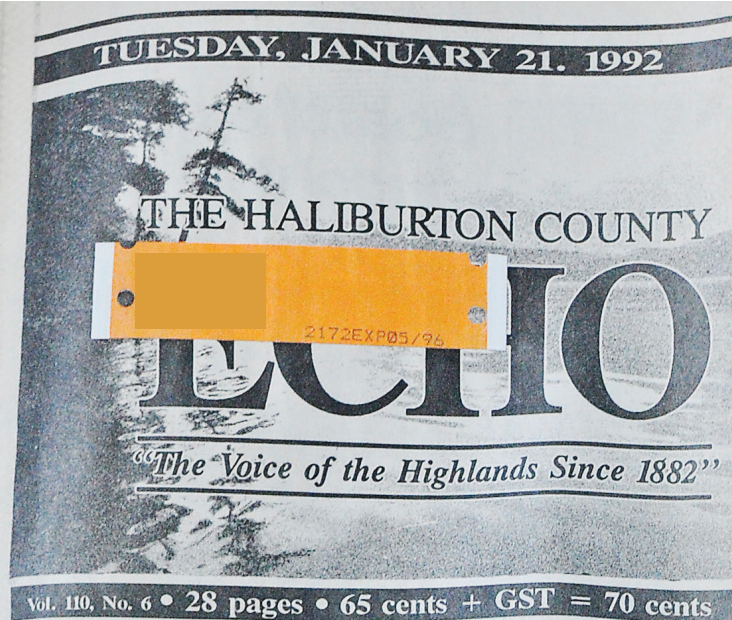


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## Concerns over schools addressed at meeting

by MARK PUBLICOVER  
Staff Reporter

The Haliburton school board set out to quell the confusion surrounding its plan to address the County's growing student accommodation problem at a public meeting at Archie Stouffer Elementary School.

"We believe the option we chose to address the problem is the most cost effective while at the same time providing the opportunity to effectively teach our children," Board Director Brad Saunders told about 75 people last Monday.

Currently, almost half of the students at Archie Stouffer are taught in temporary classrooms, Victoria Street Elementary School needs to be replaced and an in-

creasing number of students entering the system will lead to overcrowding at the high school by 1995.

In October, the board announced its solution of building a \$2.9-million addition to Archie

**'We are running out of time and it's critical we act as soon as possible'**

**Cheryl Murdoch**

Stouffer school, seeking funding to build a new elementary school in Haliburton village and then turning J.D. Hodgson Elementary School into a junior high school for Grades 7 to 9.

Past school board chairman

Cheryl Murdoch said that time is running out for the first stage of the plan.

"We had to go to the Ontario Municipal Board to obtain permission to use the IGA (to temporarily house the students who wouldn't fit in Archie Stouffer) in 1988, we have two years left on that lease and probably won't be able to renew it," she said. "We are running out of time and it is critical that we act as soon as possible to build the addition."

BOE Business Administrator Jim Bradley said in an interview that the goal is to have the addition to the school completed by September, 1994.

Ministry of Education representatives Gloria Brooks and Jack McFadden attended the meeting and told the audience that they thought the plan was a sound one.

"We prefer that decisions regarding accommodation be a local board decision," Brooks said. "They're best able to judge the needs and solutions of their students."

She also addressed concerns raised over the effectiveness of a Grade 7 to 9 junior high, saying she has been a teacher and principal at similar schools in North York and found them to work well.

McFadden, an accommodation co-ordinator, said the problem of accommodating students is growing all across Ontario and the average school has more than the Ministry-rated capacity.

"It's a big problem and while

Please turn to page 2

## FOCA suggests ways to better taxation system

by MARK PUBLICOVER  
Staff Reporter

The province should fund education on an income-related basis that reflects the ability-to-pay instead of with property tax, the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Association (FOCA) says in a paper submitted to the Fair Tax Commission.

"We don't want to shift the burden from the seasonal to the permanent residents, we just want a fairer and more equitable system," FOCA Executive Director Jerry Strickland said.

The paper, entitled *Submission to the Fair Tax Commission Concerning Cottage Property Taxation*, was prepared by York University Economics Professor John Beer and circulated to the commission, school boards and selected municipalities in November.

The Fair Tax Commission was set up last year to provide the provincial government with advice on how to design and implement a more equitable tax system for Ontario. Included on the commission is a wide variety of representatives from all levels of government, school boards, cottagers' associations and the corporate sector. It is due to present a final report by the fall of 1993.

"The government has set up the commission to look into our tax system, so obviously, they realize there are problems," Strickland said. "Tax reform has to come and we've done our best to provide our views and information and now it's up to the commission to listen to us and everyone else and hopefully, some good will come of it."

Dysart Reeve Chris Hodgson agreed that the province's tax system needs to be changed, noting that the major problem is the funding of education.

"There has to be a better way to fund education, maybe with sales taxes or something," he said. "Assessing property taxes through market value is outdated and I think everyone wants a fairer taxation system, but we'll just have to wait and see."

The FOCA submission presents a detailed analysis of the cottager's position regarding taxation and makes five recommendations.

The first is a general recommendation to "substantially decrease reliance on the property tax as a revenue source ... and to shift the financing of education to an income-related basis that reflects ability to pay." It suggests that this can be achieved by increasing the province's share for funding education from the current two-fifths to four-fifths and by introducing an education property tax scheme whereby an individual's income taxes would increase or decrease according to the size of their income relative to the amount of education property taxes paid.

"In recent years, the combined impact of market value assessments and the declining share of provincial support for education and municipal services have made property taxation for our members a question of grave concern and frustration," the paper says. "Many households with deep roots in their cottage community feel threatened by escalating property

Please turn to page 4

## Home-buyers wary despite interest rates

by MARK PUBLICOVER  
Staff Reporter

Mortgage rates are at a 20-year low but the recession is still the main concern of potential home-buyers.

"People are definitely waiting to see if there's a turn-around in the economy," Re/Max Realty Associate Broker Linda Beachli says. "The low mortgage rates certainly haven't stimulated sales."

Last year, mortgage rates were more than 11 percent for a five-year, guaranteed mortgage and last week, the Bank of Montreal was offering a rate of 9.75 percent for the same loan.

"Even the most economic housing requires monthly payments and that requires a secure job," she says. "Even though a mortgage might be \$100 less a month, peo-

ple still have to have a job to pay it, no matter what the rate is."

Realtor Keith Jackson agrees. "I haven't run into anyone yet who bought because of low interest rates," he says. "People who are buying have the money to buy what they want."

The Bank of Montreal's Haliburton branch manager, Ann Martino, says more people than usual have been inquiring about mortgage rates, but that hasn't led to an increase in business.

"There are some good deals out there now but people are waiting to see if the economy is going to improve," she says.

Beachli says sales of residential properties are down for Re/Max but recreational properties (cottages) are saving them.

"We have quite a few proper-

Please turn to page 2



**HERE'S SNOW IN YOUR FACE:** What else do you do when the school buses are cancelled and the snow keeps tumbling down from the heavens? For Joel Edwards, left, and Kyle Woodman, the answer seemed obvious — get in a snow fight. The roads and schools were quiet on Tuesday as everyone let the storm have its way.

## Snowfall far from a record but still a boon to tourism

by MARTHA PERKINS  
Editor

A few weeks ago, a front page story in the *Echo* began with the words "Pray for snow." Well, there must be a lot of faithful believers in the salvation of winter tourism because on Tuesday, we got snow. Lots of it.

"We've had such an abnormal winter, when we do get dumped on we say holy cow," says local weather watcher Jim Elstone, who recorded a snowfall of 17.6 centimetres on Tuesday. This was enough snow to make winter enthusiasts and tourist operators happy, but Elstone says it isn't near Haliburton's record for snowfall in one day. On January 17, 1971, during a five-year period of unusually high snowfall, we had 36 cm.

But no one was complaining. "It started out as a drizzle on Monday night and turned into snow on Tuesday morning at about 4:30. Then of course it snowed all day," Elstone says.

As the snow fell, so did the temperature. From Monday's high of 2.5 degrees Celsius, the mercury dropped to -8 degrees Tuesday morning, and -16 by six o'clock that night.

"We were ready for it," says Dysart et al's roads superintendent, Jim Taylor. Tuesday morning the crews got an early start, even though the pressure was off because school buses were cancelled.

"The men were actually looking forward to the snow because they knew the local economy is based on snow," he says. "It was a good

Mike Maybee says there was only one accident which might have been storm related. A car went off Highway 121 near Coxfarm Road. No one was injured.

"There were a lot of cars off the road but they just got towed out and that was the end of it," Maybee says, although it might have taken a few hours to be next on the tow truck driver's list of

**Despite the 17.6 centimetres of snow which fell with a fury last Tuesday, there was only one storm-related accident**

feeling to see the snow."

The day went well, with no break-downs or accidents. Because it snowed throughout the day, the crews were back on all the roads the next day, taking off the two or three inches of snow which had fallen since they last travelled the routes. On Thursday they were out doing touch-up ploughing and sanding, and on Friday, it snowed again.

"They're a pretty good bunch," Taylor says of his crews. "Everyone pitches in and helps."

Whether it was the roads crews' quick work or the fact that few people bothered to venture out on the roads, Mike Maybee says

rescue operations.

"People were aware of the road conditions and it wasn't the first major snow of the year," he adds. With the first big snow storm of the season, many people have forgotten how to drive in the winter and might not have their snow tires on yet, so there are a lot more accidents.

Maybee does warn, however, that the major roads can be very slippery. There is still surface snow which has been packed down, becoming as slippery as ice.

The board of education thought it was better to leave well enough alone and cancelled school buses

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